

Message Text

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ACTION SNM-05

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT PARA TWO)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS LAWS

REF: STATE 170187

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE ARE NO NARCOTICS LAWS ON THE BOOKS
IN LAOS. HOWEVER, OFFICIAL LPDR POLICY IS TO DISCOURAGE
THE CULTIVATION, SALE, AND USE OF OPIUM AND TO REHABILI-
TATE OR PUNISH THOSE WHO VIOLATE THIS POLICY. THE
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE IS REPORTEDLY DRAFTING SPECIFIC
REGULATIONS ON NARCOTICS. UNTIL THOSE REGULATIONS ARE
PROMULGATED WE SUGGEST THAT POTENTIAL VISITORS TO LAOS
BE CAUTIONED ABOUT POSSIBLE PENALTIES FOR DRUG USE IN
LAOS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC HAS PROMULGATED
NO LAWS CONCERNING NARCOTICS OR OTHER DRUGS SINCE COMING
TO POWER IN 1975, AND THE LAWS OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT
HAVE BEEN DECLARED VOID. AS A RESULT, THERE ARE AT
PRESENT NO DRUG LAWS IN LAOS.

2. THE LPDR, HOWEVER, HAS INDICATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 00796 120546Z

THAT ITS OFFICIAL POLICY IS TO DISCOURAGE THE CULTIVATION
AND USE OF OPIUM. IN MARCH 1977 LAOS SIGNED AN AGREE-
MENT WITH THE UNFDC PROVIDING FOR ADDICT REHABILITATION
AND CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECTS. THE UN AND THE LAO WERE
NEVER ABLE TO AGREE ON THE LOCATION OF THE CROP SUB-
STITUTION PROJECT; EVENTUALLY THE PROJECT WAS CANCELLED
AND THE UNFDC OFFICE IN VIENTIANE IS BEING CLOSED.

UNFDAC IS TO BE REPRESENTED IN LAOS BY THE UNDP, AND THE SMALL ADDICT REHABILITATION PROJECT REMAINS IN OPERATION.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE UN PROJECTS, LAO PARTY AND GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES USE VARIOUS METHODS OF COERION TO DISCOURAGE THE USE OF OPIUM. THESE EFFORTS ARE FREQUENTLY COMBINED WITH THE POLITICAL REHABILITATION OF THOSE CONSIDERED TO BE ANTI-SOCIAL REMNANTS OF THE PERIOD OF EXTENSIVE WESTERN INFLUENCE IN LAOS. FOR EXAMPLE A NUMBER OF ADDICTS ARE IN CONFINEMENT FOR REEDUCATION ON SEVERAL ISLAND PRISONS. FURTHER CLOUDING THE ISSUE OF LAO NARCOTICS POLICY ARE REPORTS AND RUMORS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGING OR AT LEAST DOING NOTHING TO PREVENT THE CULTIVATION OF OPIUM FOR SALE ABROAD. IN VIENTIANE THE USE OF OPIUM AND MARIJUANA REMAINS RELATIVELY UNRESTRICTED.

4. IN ORDER TO OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL VERSION OF LPDR NARCOTICS POLICY, AN EMBASSY OFFICER CALLED ON VANNOVONG PANYA, AN OFFICIAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SECOND (DEVELOPED NATIONS) DEPARTMENT. VANNOVONG CONFIRMED THAT AT PRESENT THERE WERE NO LAWS CONCERNING NARCOTICS IN LAOS. HE WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS LPDR POLICY TO DISCOURAGE THE USE OF OPIUM AND TO USE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT PRESSURES TO THIS END. HE ADDED THAT EACH CASE WAS HANDLED ON AN AD HOC BASIS BY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 00796 120546Z

LOCAL VILLAGE OFFICIALS AND THAT PENALTIES VARIED FROM CASE TO CASE DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. AS FAR AS CULTIVATION WAS CONCERNED, VANNOVONG SAID THAT IT WAS LAO POLICY TO PROHIBIT OPIUM CULTIVATION IN AREAS EXCEPT THOSE IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT PERMITTED PRODUCTION FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES.

6. VANNOVONG TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE WAS IN THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING REGULATIONS CONCERNING NARCOTICS, AND HE PROMISED TO PASS ON THE EMBASSY REQUEST FOR INFORMATION TO THE JUSTICE MINISTRY FOR A MORE DETAILED REPLY.

7. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THE LAO GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH MORE DETAILED INFORMATION. IN THE INTERIM WE SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT DRAW ON THE LESS SENSITIVE PORTIONS OF THIS TELEGRAM FOR INCLUSION IN ITS COMPILATION OF NARCOTICS LAWS. IN ANY EVENT, AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO MAY TRAVEL TO LAOS SHOULD BE INFORMED THAT IN SPITE OF THE LACK OF SPECIFIC NARCOTICS LAWS, FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN DETAINED OR EXPELLED FOR THE USE

OF NARCOTICS OR OTHER DRUGS AND THAT A NUMBER OF LAO
ARE IN CONFINEMENT FOR THE USE OF OPIUM.
ROBERTS

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